UNITED
NATIONS

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Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/C.12/1997/SR.44
3 December 1997

Original: ENGLISH

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[illegible] UNIVERSITY
COLLECTION

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Seventeenth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 44th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Friday, 28 November 1997, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. ALSTON

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GE.97-19539 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS:

(a) REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLES 16 AND 17 OF THE COVENANT (agenda item 6) (continued)

Second periodic report of Uruguay (E/1990/6/Add.10; E/C.12/1994/3; E/C.12/Q/URU/1; E/C.12/A/URU/1; HR/CESCR/NONE/97/10) (continued)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Uruguay took places at the Committee table.

Article 11. Right to an adequate standard of living

2. Mr. ADEKUOYE said paragraphs 151 and 152 of the country report (E/1990/6/Add.10), stated that a high proportion of Uruguayans were overweight and that the main cause of death was cardiovascular disease. What measures had been taken to educate the public in nutrition? Were certain groups particularly hard hit by that problem?

3. Mr. PILLAY asked what the impact of the housing shortage was on low-income groups and on Blacks in particular. Was there a problem of forced evictions? Were there statistics on the number of persons who had been forcibly evicted? Was there a homelessness problem in Uruguay?

4. Mr. WIMER asked for information on the judicial and other measures taken in cases of evictions decided by a court. Regardless of the fact the evictions were legal, were there any provisions for dealing with persons in such a situation?

5. Mr. AHMED asked the delegation to shed some light on the situation regarding poverty. According to reports contained in the country analysis (E/C.12/A/URU/1), although Uruguay continued to have a high per capita income, poverty was worsening and, in 1993, 23 per cent of the urban population had been living below the poverty line. Could the delegation confirm that figure? Also, how did that affect the housing situation, especially in Montevideo?

6. Mrs. JIMENEZ BUTRAGUEÑO inquired about the tax system. In many countries, persons with large fortunes were not taxed sufficiently. She would also like to have details on the assistance offered to small businesses.

7. Mr. STROZZI (Uruguay), replying to the question on measures to combat obesity, said that his Government had launched large-scale information campaigns aimed at achieving a change in the population's eating habits. Needless to say, that would take time. As Uruguay was a livestock-raising country, the inhabitants were big consumers of beef and it was difficult to introduce a more balanced diet. The food industry, which sponsored the campaign, was broadcasting the message with the help of the media. He had no figures, but there had been a change in eating habits in the past two years, with higher consumption of vegetables and grains. The figures could be forwarded if the Committee so desired.

8. Ms. RIVERO (Uruguay), replying to the question on evictions, said that leases were for a minimum of two years, following which, if there was no agreement between the parties and a new lease had not been signed, the tenant was entitled to extend the lease for one year. Eviction proceedings could then be initiated and took at least a year. Thereafter, two sets of rules applied. For leases prior to 1974, tenants could not be evicted until emergency housing was made available. For those who had signed leases more recently, it was assumed that the situation of the tenants was not so precarious and the regulations made for a more egalitarian relationship between tenants and landlords, i.e. a normal regime. Housing conditions in Uruguay had been improving. The Ministry of Housing, which was involved in several projects, provided subsidies or allowances. New housing was constantly being made available, both in Montevideo and in the interior.

9. Mr. WIMER asked what happened to families that had exhausted all legal remedies and were thrown out into the street. Were there any provisions at municipal or national level for housing them?

10. Ms. RIVERO (Uruguay) said that there were State bodies which provided temporary, emergency housing, although capacity was minimal. However, no one was left to sleep in the street.

11. Mr. BADI NADRUZ (Uruguay), referring to other questions raised, said that there was a mortgage bank in Uruguay which extended credits for purchasing or building housing. In the interior, there was an institution, the MEDIR, the movement for the eradication of insalubrious housing, a body that had recently taken strong action in connection with the migration of the population from rural areas to the cities and was also increasingly involved in housing construction. Some Government bodies provided emergency assistance. For example, in the past few days, many people had fled their homes after the flooding of the Uruguay River, and the Ministry of Housing had allocated considerable funds for resettling families that had been left homeless.

12. With regard to the situation in Montevideo, the population of the city had declined, leading to a sharp fall in the price of rentals and a housing glut. On the other hand, there had been a demographic explosion in the neighbouring coastal area, with considerable housing construction.

13. Mr. SADI said the Committee had been told that there were 1 million housing units in Uruguay, of which 30 per cent were rented. Did that mean that the remaining 70 per cent were privately owned? What was the standard of those dwellings? Did they have electricity and running water and was there an adequate road infrastructure? Again, was there a problem with deforestation in Uruguay? If so, how was it affected by housing construction?

14. Mr. TEXIER said that, according to his information, the Five Year Plan (1995-1999) was behind schedule with housing construction. Was that information correct, and if so, what measures were being taken to close the gap?

15. Mr. GRISSA inquired about housing in rural areas. Many persons worked with cattle on big haciendas. What were the housing conditions of farm labourers? Did migrants from other countries also work there? If that was the case, what were the arrangements for housing them?

16. Mr. BADI NADRUZ, replying first to the question on housing quality, said that, as in other countries, there were differences between housing for the affluent classes and housing for the poor. Under the Five Year Plan, running water was being supplied to virtually all localities in the interior. He did not have the exact figures, which could be provided later, but he was certain that there were virtually no localities of more than 900 inhabitants without drinking water or sewage disposal. There was also a plan to make electricity available to a large part of the rural population.

17. Regarding Mr. Sadi's question on forests, he pointed out that Uruguay did not have extensive forest areas such as in Brazil. There was legislation on forestry use, which he could likewise forward if members so wished. Large-scale reafforestation campaigns were under way in areas with poor soil.

18. Mr. AHMED said that, according to information in the country analysis, in the interior of the country 700,000 inhabitants were living in houses with no running water and more than 1 million had no sanitation. Perhaps the delegation would comment on that matter.

19. Mr. BADI NADRUZ (Uruguay) said that his delegation would submit the exact figures shortly. When he had spoken of the situation in the interior, he had not meant to imply that each and every inhabitant of the rural areas had running water. The Ministry of Public Health was working on ways to make sure that running water could be provided to certain areas where it was now lacking.

20. Mr. STROZZI (Uruguay) said that housing had no impact on forests, since most dwellings were built with cinder blocks.

21. As to Mr. Grissa's question on farm labourers, there were very few migrants in that category, apart from a small number of Brazilians in some border areas. Housing was provided for them by the housing authority or in dwellings made available by the employers.

22. Mr. TEXIER said that, according to the official figures of the Ministry of Housing, there would be a housing shortage of 120,000 dwellings, including 112,000 for low-income families by the year 2000, and the number of dwellings of families that had settled in shantytowns had grown from 2,500 units in 1984 to almost 10,000 units in 1996. For Montevideo alone, there were 111 such shantytowns, with 53,000 inhabitants. That phenomenon seemed to be a direct consequence of the shortcomings of the Five Year Plan. Could the delegation of Uruguay confirm those figures?

23. Mr. PILLAY said that his question had not been answered: given the high level of rent in Uruguay, was there a problem of homelessness and forced evictions among low-income groups, and among Blacks in particular?

24. Mr. STROZZI (Uruguay) said that the Montevideo town council and the central Government were working together to find a solution to the shantytowns that involved ceding land, offering the possibility of building permanent structures and ensuring sanitary conditions for existing housing. There again, his delegation could submit exact data on the situation, together with a copy of the Five Year Plan.

25. Mr. LISTA (Uruguay) said that the Ministry of Housing had been established two years ago to deal specifically with low-income housing. The Ministry and the Uruguay Mortgage Bank were the official bodies endeavouring to improve housing conditions for low-income groups.

26. A statute on rural workers had been enacted to establish conditions for their protection. It laid down, among other things, compulsory standards for the living and working conditions of farm workers.

27. A pilot programme (CINCO) had been launched through international cooperation with Mexico to provide technical assistance and training to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), while strengthening the links between SMEs, trade unions and employers' groups. Financed by the Workers' Retraining Fund, its aim was to consolidate the occupational structure of SMEs through improved competitiveness. Small and medium-sized enterprises were valued, not only in terms of their role in national production, but also for their input and the number of persons they employed.

28. Mr. GRISSA asked about the size of the migrant workforce and whether the economic, social and cultural rights of those workers were adequately protected. He would like specific details of the pay structure and other work conditions.

29. Mr. STROZZI (Uruguay) said that he did not have precise figures on the number of migrant workers in Uruguay, but in all likelihood they were as few as 100 to 120 persons.

30. Mr. LISTA (Uruguay) said that, under the Civil Code, foreign rural workers had the same rights and obligations as citizens of Uruguay. In order to qualify for a work contract, the individual had to apply to a Uruguayan consulate in his country of origin, or direct to the Uruguayan immigration authorities. Upon receipt of an identity card, workers enjoyed the full protection of labour regulations, on an equal footing with Uruguayan citizens.

31. The CHAIRPERSON said that perhaps the best course would be for the members of the Committee and the delegation to focus their questions and answers in terms of the Covenant. He urged the delegation to provide specific information on the actual, rather than the legislative, situation in Uruguay.

32. Mrs. JIMENEZ BUTRAGUEÑO asked about legislation on reafforestation, particularly with respect to the introduction of plant species and the impact on the environment.

33. The CHAIRPERSON said that, in view of strict time constraints, the questions should succinctly identify the Covenant-specific dimension of such issues.

34. Mr. LISTA (Uruguay) said there was a law governing indigenous plant species, and he assured Mrs. Jimenez Butragueño that the relevant text would be forwarded to her in due course.

35. Regarding the national fiscal system, the main form of taxation was value-added tax, but a wealth tax and an agricultural profits tax were levied on assets.

36. Mr. BERTHET (Uruguay) said that eviction proceedings were in no way based on the class or racial origin of the occupant, as all persons were governed by the same legal regime.

Article 12. The right to physical and mental health

37. Mr. SADI referred to statistics illustrating a dramatic rise in HIV-AIDS infection between 1994 and 1996 and asked whether those statistics were official. In some countries there was a discrepancy between the actual incidence of a disease and official statistics. The World Health Organization had recently announced that the incidence of HIV infection was twice as high as originally believed. In addition, did the Government have data of drug addiction?

38. Mr. CEVILLE pointed out that Uruguay had formulated a National Mental Health Programme in 1985, but he understood that the project had not been implemented. What exactly was the reason?

39. As to protection of the elderly, apparently life expectancy was 72 years and approximately 25 per cent of the Uruguayan population were over 65. He was interested in the treatment of the elderly, particularly in the context of complaints made to the Uruguayan Parliament about the situation faced by homeless older persons placed in asylums.

40. Mr. CEAUSU, sharing Mr. Ceville's concern that the 1985 National Mental Health Programme had not been implemented for budgetary reasons, drew attention to the fact that NGOs had submitted a number of proposals for legislative reform of mental health care. What were the weaknesses and shortcomings of the mental health-care system and what solutions were envisaged by society and the Government?

41. Mr. GRISSA, referring to paragraph 221 of the periodic report, pointed out that neither Uruguay's physical size nor its population could be accurately described as "small". In what respect, apart from health, could the four Departments of the country be considered disadvantaged? He would like specific data on the subject of disadvantaged groups and an explanation of the "Gomez-Nuñez box", mentioned in paragraph 223.

42. Again, on the question of prostitution along the Uruguayan border with Brazil, how was the Government monitoring the spread of sexually-transmitted diseases, which had reached alarming proportions in that region?

43. Mr. TEXIER said that one of the consequences for public health of a lack of resources was a shortage of medical staff. According to the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), in 1991 the ratio of doctors to nurses had been

unusually skewed in favour of doctors. There had been 2,217 doctors and only 1,774 nurses. It appeared that one of the reasons for the shortage of nurses was the low salaries they received.

44. PAHO had reported that almost 7 per cent of the rural population did not live within reach of health clinics. How did the Government intend to restore the balance between rural and urban areas and increase health coverage to people in remote areas?

45. Mr. AHMED said he shared Mr. Texier's concern that, because of dwindling financial resources, Uruguay could not continue to offer its previously high standard of health care. Whereas Uruguay had ranked first in Latin America, it had now fallen to third place in that regard. He wondered what could be done to make sure that the situation did not deteriorate further and that it could even be improved.

46. Mr. STROZZI (Uruguay) explained that the material circulated to the Committee contained detailed statistics on the incidence and development of HIV-AIDS cases in Uruguay. During the first half of 1997, the number of deaths had fallen by 50 per cent as compared with the same period in 1996, and the Government hoped that the trend would continue. There had always been a problem of data collection on the number of HIV-AIDS cases, for there was considerable under-registration. However, it was clear that there had been a significant improvement in the detection of the disease.

47. The 1985 National Mental Health Programme was a programme which had in fact been implemented, but the problem was that it did not receive specific funding. Describing the structure of the health services, he stressed that in 1986 there had been a fundamental change in the model used for the administration of mental health care. In 1990 a network of pilot services had been developed and used to shift the emphasis of psychiatric care from hospitals to community-based mental health care. The Uruguayan model was being adopted by WHO and PAHO.

48. The Government had made a substantial investment in providing 10 interdisciplinary teams in Montevideo and 20 in the rest of the country, in an effort to provide comprehensive care for mental patients. Those teams consisted of various health and other professionals who worked under an incentive scheme which had already yielded highly satisfactory results in the treatment of patients.

49. Over the past year, intensive research and work had been undertaken to address the issue of care of the elderly. Existing norms were found to be obsolete and the system was therefore being revamped to respond to current needs. It was a major endeavour covering all establishments involved in looking after the elderly.

50. The shortage of nurses in university, as opposed to other hospitals, stemmed mainly from the low salaries, but it was further compounded by the fact that the Nursing School had not been operational for quite some time. Another major disincentive to entering the profession was the fact that the training period for nurses was more than five years, which was considered

particularly long when compared to other professions. On the other hand, there was one doctor for every 225 inhabitants and no shortage of nursing aides or other technicians.

51. Health coverage in rural areas was governed by the agreements between the Ministry of Public Health and the public health institutions operating in the remoter regions. Under such agreements, the same technical resources must be offered to ensure that the health care to those small communities was as good as was offered in the capital, with due allowance for local conditions.

52. The proportion of the population without access to health coverage was quite low, namely, less than 10 per cent. The country's geography was not an obstacle, but families in remote areas did have difficulties in reaching health clinics.

53. Mr. CEVILLE said that the information provided did not always seem very precise and indeed was sometimes contradictory. For example, the delegation stated that the National Mental Health Programme, contrary to the assertion in paragraph 179 of the report, was being implemented.

54. Mr. ADEKUOYE, noting that traffic accidents and suicide accounted for a large number of deaths among males in the 15 to 24 age group, asked whether any study had been carried out into the underlying causes of suicide in young people and, if so, what the findings had been. Was there any link with drug abuse or mental ill health?

55. Mr. GRISSA said he had not received a reply to his questions relating to paragraphs 221 to 225 of the report. First, he had wanted an explanation of what was meant by "disadvantaged groups". In the case of paragraph 221, he had then asked what particular health problems afflicted the four Departments mentioned as having substantial numbers of needy households. Further, he had asked for a description of the "Gomez Nuñez" box, referred to at the end of paragraph 223.

56. Large numbers of prostitutes were known to be active on the border between Uruguay and Brazil. In other areas of the world, such as sub-Saharan Africa, the movement of prostitutes across borders was known to make a considerable contribution to the spread of HIV-AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. What health protection measures was Uruguay taking in that context?

57. Mr. STROZZI (Uruguay) said that, since he had not personally been involved in the drafting of the report, he was unaware of the reason why the four Departments had been singled out in paragraph 221. Information on the point could, however, be provided in writing to the Committee later. Although there was known to be a considerable amount of prostitution along the border with Brazil, no study had been made of that particular problem and no special measures had been taken in that respect. As far as adolescents were concerned, special programmes to counter drug and alcohol abuse were being implemented throughout the country.

58. The rate of suicide among young people was a cause of great concern. A study was under way on the problems facing adolescents, but had not yet accumulated sufficient data to provide clear answers.

59. Mr. GRISSA noted that, during the Committee's consideration of Uruguay's initial report, the Uruguayan delegation had acknowledged prostitution and drug trafficking on the border with Brazil to be a problem. The Committee also had information from other sources on the matter. He was therefore surprised that no measures appeared to be in place to deal with the issue.

60. Mr. ADEKUOYE said he understood that, since a high degree of centralization was the principal source of the problems encountered in health care administration, the Government had recently submitted a bill to the Parliament for the decentralization of health services. Had the bill since passed into law and, if so, what stage had been reached in regard to implementation?

61. Mr. STROZZI (Uruguay) said that, although he was unaware of any study of prostitution, the problem of drug abuse had been recognized and there were a number of programmes to tackle it.

62. The bill for decentralization of the health system had been suspended, since it had met considerable opposition from a number of deputies, mainly from Departments in the interior of the country. The Government, which continued in its wholehearted support for decentralization, was at present in the process of redrafting the bill to make it more acceptable to the Parliament.

Articles 13 and 14. Right to education

63. Mr. SADI said that the percentages of GNP spent on education reported in paragraph 251 of the written replies to the list of issues (HR/CESCR/NONE/97/10) appeared to indicate that three quarters of the population in education was apparently being educated in the public sector and one quarter in the private sector. Was there any major difference in the quality of education provided by the two sectors? Noting that the universities received 20 per cent of the spending on education, he wondered whether that represented public or private expenditure. Was the Uruguayan schools system a secular one or did religious schools exist in either the public or the private sector?

64. Mr. TEXIER said that, in the discussion on article 12 of the Covenant, the shortage of nurses had been ascribed to inadequate salaries and to a shortage of nursing teachers. Inadequate funding appeared to be a universal problem in the field of education in general. Low salaries had a major impact on teacher quality and teacher numbers and hence on the right to education. Improvements could only be achieved by paying teachers a proper rate for their work, as had been recommended in paragraph 18 in the Committee's concluding observations on Uruguay's initial report (E/C.12/1994/3). However, he realized that was easier said than done and would require difficult budget choices, but it was an essential step in ensuring economic, social and cultural rights.

65. Mr. PILLAY said it was admirable that all levels of education in Uruguay were available to the public free of charge. However, he would like to know what proportion of Blacks or persons from low-income groups actually enrolled in universities. Information in his possession indicated that there were wide differences in the educational benefit gained by children from different social and economic backgrounds. What steps was the Government taking to remedy the difficulties faced by children from disadvantaged groups in benefiting from the education offered to them? A sound primary education was essential if children were to be able to proceed to higher levels.

66. Mr. GRISSA asked what proportion of children dropped out of school before they had completed their schooling. What was the distribution of the drop-out rate by income group, racial group, or as between urban and rural areas? Very often, children from poor families dropped out of education in order to take up work. Were any measures being taken to reduce drop-out rates and help such children catch up with lost education?

67. Mr. ADEKUOYE said that the educational reform aims set out in paragraph 267 of the written replies included the supply of educational assistance to 35 per cent of young people from rural areas after they left school. Did that refer to young people who had completed secondary education or to those that had dropped out of it? What form did the educational assistance take?

68. Mr. BADI NADRUZ (Uruguay) said that the Committee could be supplied with figures on any matter it might want. Uruguay had merely felt that it would make the report too unwieldy to submerge it in statistics. The National Statistics Institute provided all information necessary to follow trends in education. In addition there were teachers' associations that could propose improvements to the system.

69. Although 25 per cent of the expenditure on education might be contributed by the private sector, the actual proportion of education that it did provide was 20 per cent. Under the Constitution, parents were free to choose what type of education they wanted for their children. The majority of schools were in the public sector, which catered for every kind of school education, from kindergarten up to technical and teacher training. With regard to the comparative quality of public and private education, the findings of a survey conducted in 1996 into knowledge of mathematics and the mother tongue among pupils in the sixth year of primary education had found no difference in the standards reached in public and State authorized private schools. The training for teachers in teacher training colleges was the same, regardless of the sector in which they would later teach. The Primary Education Council was during the current year looking at the quality of the whole of the primary school cycle, since a good grounding in the basics was essential for successful continuation into secondary and higher education.

70. The majority of universities were in the public sector. The high standards of those universities was evident in the international recognition large numbers of their graduates had received in many fields. Since the issue of the report in 1996, authorization had been granted for the opening of a second private university.

71. There were a number of non-secular schools in Uruguay available to parents who wished their children to have a religious education. However, under the law, all private schools, in addition to admitting paying pupils, were obliged to leave 20 per cent of places free for needy students.

72. The National Public Education Administration was well aware of the need to improve teachers' salaries, and a considerable increase had been made in 1997. A grading system had been introduced for teachers with seven salary categories, allowing teachers to move upwards from one category to another throughout their careers, depending on such factors as years of service, level of qualifications and level of responsibilities, thus encouraging them to improve standards.

73. Teachers in schools in low-income areas received a 20 per cent bonus over and above their normal salaries to compensate for the difficulties of the job. The teacher training process had two segments: teacher training college, which concentrated on theory, and practice college. Teachers in the practice colleges received bonuses for tutoring individual students; the directors of those colleges received both bonuses and a salary increase. In 1996, teachers in both public and private primary schools, all of whom held teaching qualifications had received additional bonuses of 5 per cent. Teachers in secondary schools who held degrees received similar bonuses. In 1997, those bonuses had been increased to 7.5 per cent. The Parliament had also approved a budget allocation for bonuses to teachers with good attendance records. In 1997, 3,000 teachers working in schools servicing highly disadvantaged areas had received bonuses of 30 per cent.

74. There was naturally a close tie between academic achievement and family cultural background. The administration had requested teachers to provide information on the home lives of students and was using their findings in the development of new teaching strategies.

75. In 1997, there had been three days of teacher strikes within the primary school system and they had included 16,000 out of about 30,000 odd teachers in Uruguay. At secondary schools and vocational schools, the number of strike days had been greater.

76. There were no figures on the percentage of black children or children from poor families in Uruguayan public schools. The delegation would transmit that concern to the Government. In 1996, the Government had achieved its goal of supplying textbooks at all school levels. In 1997, over 1 million textbooks had been acquired in language, mathematics and science, selected by qualified specialists and teacher boards.

77. The "full-time" schools (E/1990/6/Add.10, para. 254) had been especially designed to address the needs of children from low-income families. They offered special programmes in art, music and physical education, and provided breakfast, lunch, tea, and take-home evening meals. There were 58 such schools currently in existence, and plans were under way to construct 300 new classrooms in 1998. A demographic study had been conducted and the location of new "full-time" schools would be based on its findings.

78. Education was free in Uruguay at all levels and the administration was placing particular emphasis on the enrolment of four and five year olds. All the relevant literature argued for the necessity of early education. A recent census had shown a great disparity between school enrolment of poor and rural children and that of urban children of well-to-do parents. It had also been established that school enrolment was associated with the educational level of the head of the family. Only 5 per cent of children whose parents had a university education were not enrolled in pre-primary schools, compared with 68 per cent of children whose parents had not completed primary school. It was often the case that children did not attend school because the demand was greater than the supply. Unfortunately, in some areas there were two or three year waiting periods for enrolment in pre-primary schools. The Government was making considerable efforts to rent or construct additional school rooms, with assistance from, among other organizations, the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Fund. Under Uruguayan law, enterprises could pay their taxes either into the public coffers or direct to schools. That provision had previously applied only to primary schools, but had recently been extended to all educational levels. Uruguay was well aware that it could not compete in the world market if it did not train and educate its citizens.

79. The statistical document circulated to members showed that school drop-out levels in primary schools were low: 0.7 per cent in Montevideo, and 0.8 in other urban centres. The figures also gave a breakdown by sex. The drop-out rates were higher in the interior because more students were held back a grade and therefore left school. Drop-out rates in the first secondary-school cycle were 12.4 per cent in Montevideo and 12.5 per cent in other urban centres; in the second secondary-school cycle 10.3 in Montevideo and 14.5 in other urban centres. Figures were also available for higher educational levels and vocational schools.

80. Mr. GRISSA said that the data provided on school drop-out rates were insufficient. They covered only urban, not rural, areas and were not broken down by income, race or region. Furthermore, the table with figures on the percentage of the national budget allocated to the National Public Education Administration (ANEP) was confusing. Did the first table cover only primary and secondary education or did it include university education as well? It would be useful to know how to determine the total yearly allocation for education.

81. Mr. TEXIER said the table on budget allocations for education showed that, although there had been an increase between 1994 and 1996, there had in fact been a decrease since 1990. Furthermore, the table on salaries for teachers of grades 4 and 5 showed a loss of purchasing power between 1994 and 1996. While salaries had been raised in the higher echelons of the teaching profession and bonuses and salary increases had been paid to teachers in low-income areas, it appeared that teacher salaries in general had not increased, and might even have decreased slightly.

82. Mr. BADI NADRUZ (Uruguay) said that statistics had not been provided on education in rural areas, because 90 per cent of the school population lived in urban areas. Those figures were, however, available, and would be forwarded to the Committee. The drop-out rate was lower in rural areas, where

children usually completed primary and secondary school. Compulsory secondary school education had placed a strain on rural schools, 33 per cent of which served fewer than 10 pupils. Thus far, no rural schools had been closed. Among the solutions under consideration were the transfer of rural students to urban schools and mergers of rural schools. Educational statistics could not be provided on racial groups because no such groups existed in Uruguay.

83. The National Public Education Administration (ANEP) included pre-primary education, primary education, secondary education, vocational school, and teacher training institutions. The Government was indeed concerned with the level of teacher salaries and with lending dignity to the teaching profession. The figures for teacher salaries should be viewed in relation to the rate of inflation, which had dropped from 40 per cent in 1995 to 16 per cent in 1997. It was worth noting that GDP nad climbed 2 or 3 points since 1996, which meant more money for education.

84. The CHAIRMAN thanked the Uruguayan delegation for the presentation of the report. He reminded the Government that the Committee attached great importance to the additional information it had requested, which would be used in preparing the concluding observations.

85. Mr. BERTHET (Uruguay) said he was gratified by the interest shown by the members of the Committee in gaining a greater understanding of Uruguay. The participation of high-level members of his Government would contribute to the implementation of the Covenant in Uruguay and to continued progress in the economic, social and cultural spheres.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.